...of Children's Bearing the Iniquities of their Fathers.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the Honourable

HOUSE of PEERS,

IN THE

Abbey-Church at WESTMINSTER,

On *Monday*, *January* the 31st. 1708.

Being the Day appointed to be kept as the Day of the

MARTYRDOM

Of the Blessed

KING *CHARLES* the Ist.

By OFSPRING, Lord Bishop of EXON.

LONDON:

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Die Martis 1° *Februarij*, 1708.

IT is Ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament Aſſembled, That the Thanks of this Houſe ſhall be, and they are hereby Given to the Lord Biſhop of *Exeter*, for his Sermon Preached before this Houſe Yeſterday, in the *Abbey-Church* at *Weſtminſter*; And is hereby Deſired to Print and Publiſh the ſame.

Matth. Johnſon,
Cl' Parliamentor'

LAMENT. V. 7.

Our Fathers have ſinned, and are not, and we have born their Iniquities.

THE Title of this Book, call'd *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*, declares its Author; and the Subject or Matter of it ſufficiently ſhews upon what Occaſion it was written; *Viz.* Either the Death of *Joſiah*, or the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; Or both.

For that it was written upon Occaſion of *Joſiah*'s Death, is probably argu'd from what we read in 2 *Chron.* XXXV. 25. *And Jeremiah lamented for Joſiah; and all the Singing Men and Singing Women ſpake of Joſiah in their Lamentations to this Day, and made them an Ordinance in Iſrael; and behold they are written in the Lamentations.*

But that it was written upon Occaſion of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the Captivity in *Babylon*, is, I think, ſtill more probably argued from that Preface or Introduction to this Book, which (tho' not in the *Hebrew*) we meet with in the *Greek* Tranſlation thereof by the *Seventy*, in theſe Words; "And it "came to paſs, that after *Iſrael* was carried Captive, "and *Jeruſalem* deſtroy'd, *Jeremiah* ſat down weep- "ing; and lamented, or utter'd forth, this Lamen- "tation upon *Jeruſalem*, and ſaid; "*How doth the* "*City ſit ſorrowful*, &c.

But it may be, and indeed I think it the moſt probable Opinion of all, that the Book (as it now is) was written upon both theſe Occaſions; I mean, That upon the Death of good King *Joſiah*, which happen'd ſome Years before the Captivity, *Jeremiah* did lament for *him*, in ſome ſuch Words as we now meet with in this Book; But that afterwards, upon

the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the carrying of the People Captive into *Babylon*; he review'd his former Mournful Song, and added thereto, and intermingled therewith ſome other Paſſages that were more peculiarly expreſſive of thoſe ſad Calamities.

The Book it ſelf conſiſts of two Principal Parts; The firſt, contain'd in the four firſt Chapters, is chiefly a ſorrowful Deſcription of the miſerable Condition of the *Jews*, by the Loſs of ſuch an excellent King, by the Ruin and Deſtruction of their City and Kingdom, and by their own Slavery in *Babylon*. The other Part, comprehended in this 5th Chapter, is a Prayer to God for Deliverance from that ſore Affliction which they were then under; wherein to move God to Compaſſion, their ſad and miſerable State is again ſet forth, and humbly repreſented to him.

The Words I am now to diſcourſe of are a Part of this Prayer. And, as ſuch, they may be taken and underſtood three Ways.

I. As a ſimple Affirmation of a Matter of Fact; *Our Fathers have ſinned and are not, and we have born their Iniquity.*

II. As a Complaint, or an Expoſtulation with God about it; as if it had been ſaid; "Why is this; or "what Juſtice or Reaſon is there in it, that we ſhould "be puniſh'd for our Father's Sins? Or,

III. Laſtly; As a Petition to God, that it might be ſo no longer, but that this Entail of Puniſhment might be now cut off.

And accordingly, In my Diſcourſe on the Words, I ſhall do theſe three things.

1. I ſhall prove the Matter of Fact; *Viz.* That God does ſometimes make the Children bear the Sins of the Fathers.

2. I ſhall ſhew that this Method of God's dealing with ſinful Men is not to be complain'd of as unjuſt. And

3. Laſtly,

3. Lastly; I shall shew, that it is nevertheless a proper Matter of Petition or Prayer to God, that he would be pleas'd to cut off this Entail of Punishment, and *not remember against us the Iniquities of our Fathers.*

And in the Handling of each of these Heads, I shall have a particular Respect to that which is the Occasion of this Day's Humiliation and Fasting.

I. I shall prove the Matter of Fact; *Viz.* That God does sometimes make the Children bear the Sins of the Fathers. *Our Fathers have sinned* —— *and we have born their Iniquities.*

And for the Proof of this we should need to look no farther than to that very Case which the Text refers to; *Viz.* the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Captivity of the *Jews* in *Babylon*; which came not to pass till about threescore Years, or more, after that wicked Part of *Manasseh*'s Reign, whereby God had been provoked, and upon which he had determin'd, to inflict this heavy Judgment upon them. 2 *King.* xxiii. 26, 27.

But this is not the only Instance of this Kind that the Scripture furnishes us with. For, for the Idolatry of *Ahab*, his whole Family was cut off; for the Sin of *Saul* in Killing the *Gibeonites*, the Kingdom after his Death was Plagued with three Years Famine, Year after Year, in the Reign of *David*; and the same Sin was again most severely punished in *Saul*'s own Family, when it could not be expiated, nor the Plague that was thereby occasioned be removed, but by the Hanging up of Seven of his Issue. And it was for the Sin of *Eli* and his Sons that his whole Posterity was depriv'd of the Priesthood, and that all the Increase of his House died in the Flower of their Age. 2 *Kings* x. 11. 2 *Sam.* xxi. 1. *V.* 9. 14. 1 *Sam.* ii. 33.

And what need I add more? for we may see with our own Eyes a standing Example of this in the whole

Nation of the *Jews*, a People once belov'd by God, and highly favour'd above all other Nations; But they, when they *crucified the Lord of Life and Glory*, said, *His Blood be on us, and on our Children*; And so it has been ever since: For from that Time to this, they have never been in such a flourishing Condition as before. It was not many Years after that their City and Temple and Commonwealth were entirely destroy'd, and their whole Nation dispersed; ever since which they have wander'd about the World as Vagabonds, every where hated and despis'd, and in some Places and Ages most miserably butcher'd and slaughter'd; so that if one should add together the prodigious Numbers of them, that have been Massacred in several Ages and Countries, chiefly in and soon after, the Siege and Destruction of *Jerusalem*, one would think it hardly possible that any of them should be remaining; and yet still they do remain, and in great Numbers too, some of them in almost every Country in the World, and every where unmix'd with other People, to be, as it were living Monuments of God's heavy Displeasure.

Matth. xxvii. 25.

Or, We may, if we will, see still a greater Example of this Entail of Punishment in our selves; I mean in the whole Race of Mankind; upon all whom there is (as we see and feel by our own sad Experience) entail'd a Curse, and a Disease, for the Transgression of our first Parents; For 'tis to that we all now owe our present Misery and Mortality. *By one Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death passed upon all Men.*

Rom. v. 12.

And Lastly, if we reflect upon that which is the Occasion of our now humbling our selves before God, *viz.* the barbarous Murder of King *CHARLES* the First of Blessed Memory, by his own Subjects, the People of this Land, and the Rebellion which preceeded it, I believe we may think that we also have

have some Reason to say with the *Jews* in the Text, *Our Fathers have sinned and are not, and we have born their Iniquities*; For well may those Evils and Calamities be thought to be sent upon the Nation for that Sin, which have been in natural Consequence the Fruits of it.

And such were, plainly, those many Years of Misery, of Anarchy or Tyranny, and of great Confusion, which immediately follow'd; and which continued until the Happy Restoration of King *CHARLES* the Second: During which Time we might have taken up and applyed to our selves a considerable Part of this Book of *the Lamentations*; We might have said, as the *Prophet* here does;

How hath the Lord afflicted Zion for the Multitude of her Transgressions? From the Daughter of Zion all her Beauty is departed; Her Princes are become like Harts that find no Pasture; they are gone without Strength before the Pursuer. How hath the Lord cover'd the Daughter of Zion with a Cloud in his Anger, and cast down from Heaven to the Earth the Beauty of Israel, and remembred not his Footstool in the Day of his Anger? Her King, and her Princes were among the Gentiles; The Law was no more; the Prophets also found no Vision from the Lord. The Elders sat upon the Ground and kept Silence, they cast Dust upon their Heads, and cover'd themselves with Sackcloth. All they that went by clapp'd their Hands at her; they hissed and wagged their Head, saying; Is this the City that Men called the Perfection of Beauty, the Joy of the whole Earth? All her Enemies also open'd their Mouth against her, and said, We have swallow'd her up; Certainly, this is the Day that we looked for; We have found, we have seen it. The Priests and the Prophets were slain in the Sanctuary of the Lord; The young and the old lay on the Ground in the Streets;

Chap. i. V. 5, 6.

Chap. ii. V. 1. 9. 10. 15. 16. 20. 21.

Ch. iv. V. 5. *the Virgins and the Young Men fell by the Sword. They that were brought up in Scarlet did embrace Dunghills. The Adversary and*
12. *the Enemy entred into the Gates of Jerusalem;*
13. *they shed the Blood of the Just in the midst of her. Also the Breath of our Nostrils, the Anointed*
20. *of the Lord was taken in their Pits; of whom we said, under his shadow we shall be safe.*
Ch. v. V. 2. Then *was our Inheritance turned to Strangers,*
and our Houses to Aliens; We drank our Water
4. *for Money, and our Wood was sold unto us.*
Our Necks were under Persecution; we la-
5. *bour'd and had no rest. Servants also did rule*
8. *over us; and there was none to deliver us out of their Hand.*

But from their Hand (God be thank'd) we have now for many Years been deliver'd; By the Wonderful and most Providential Restoration of King *CHARLES* the Second to his just Rights, *we* also were *restored to our ancient Government both in Church and State, and to the publick and free Possession of the true Religion, together with our former Peace and Prosperity.*

And yet, for all this, I doubt I may truly say, that we do even still in some Measure bear that Iniquity of our Fathers which we this Day desire to be humbled for.

For if we look back to the Times past, it will be easy to discern, that even the War which we are at this time engag'd in, had its first Ground in the Wickedness of this Day. For when the Father was cut off, and his Throne and Power usurp'd, the young Princes were forc'd to wander where they could find a Place; And there, in the Court of a Neighbouring King, they might easily learn (there, one of them, we are too sure, did learn) Customs and Manners, both in Government and Religion, clearly different from those which had been here receiv'd and esta-

blish'd.

bliſh'd. And ſuch Diligence (we well remember) was us'd, and ſuch Progreſs made, during a ſhort Reign of leſs than Four Years, in endeavouring to bring in the ſame Cuſtoms and Manners among us, that if that Reign had continued much longer, we muſt (unavoidably, to all Appearance) have been brought under very great Bondage, both Spiritual and Temporal. But it pleaſed God, of his Goodneſs, to cut ſhort thoſe Days, ſo that our Enemies had not Time enough to accompliſh their wicked Deſigns; It pleas'd him, I ſay, by a wonderful Deliverance, ſuch as could not have been look'd for, to preſerve to us then our Rights, Properties and Religion; upon which we might have ſaid, in the Words of the *Pſalmiſt*, *Our Soul is eſcaped as a Bird out of the Snare of the Fowler; the Snare is broken, and we are delivered.* But however, tho' God was graciouſly pleas'd not then to puniſh us ſo much as he ſeem'd to threaten he would do, and as we were afraid he would have done; he was not ſo far reconcil'd to us as to forgive our Sin wholly, and ſuffer us to go altogether unpuniſhed; but when he removed one Judgment, ſent another in its Room. So that tho' it may (I hope truly) be ſaid, that we are now made whole of that Diſeaſe, of which before we were ſick almoſt to Death; it muſt nevertheleſs be granted, that even the Remedy by which we were cured, and by the Uſe whereof we are ſtill preſerv'd in Health, tho' not ſo bad as the Diſeaſe, yet has been, and ſtill is, very painful and afflicting. For there was no way to keep out Popery and Slavery then preſſing hard upon us, but by engaging in War with a potent Enemy, whoſe Strength, now, after ſo many Years Experience as we have had of it, we have learn'd, I ſuppoſe, not to deſpiſe.

Foraſmuch therefore as this tedious and expenſive War, which we have been now, for many Years engag'd in, and of which God knows when we ſhall

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see an End, was, when it was first undertaken, and still is, the necessary Remedy of those much worse Evils that we were before in Fear, and indeed in very great Danger of; and forasmuch as the great Danger we were in of those Evils was directly and naturally occasion'd by the young Princes being sent abroad to wander in foreign Countries, by those who had first rebelled against and Murdered the Father, and then seized upon his and their Inheritance; I think I may truly say, that tho' *our Fathers who sinned are not*; yet we, in this heavy Judgment of God still lying upon us, do to this Day, *bear their Iniquities*; and how much longer we shall do so under this, or some other Judgment, God only knows.

But, I observ'd before that these Words might be understood, not only as affirming a Matter of Fact, that thus it is, but also as implying a Complaint, or an Expostulation with God about it; *Our Fathers have sinned, and we have born their Iniquities*; as if it had been said, "Why is this? Or what Justice "or Reason is there in it, that we should *bear the* "*Iniquities* of *our Fathers* that *sinned*? why is it, that "when they are dead and gone out of the World, "who did the Sin; We, who, being not then born, "could not, We, who, if we had been then Liv-"ing, would not have consented to, nor been Par-"takers in their Wickedness, should be Punished for "it." And therefore I propounded in the Second Place, and to that I now proceed,

II. To shew that this Method of God's dealing with sinful Men is not to be complain'd of as unjust. And this I hope will sufficiently appear, if these following things be consider'd.

1. That the Temporal Evils, by which the Sins of the Fathers are punish'd in their Children, are, many times, no other than the natural and necessary Effects of those Sins which the Fathers were guilty of.

This

This I have ſhewn to be in great Meaſure true as to thoſe Evils, which we of this Nation have felt, and do ſtill feel, in Puniſhment (as we may well think) of the Sin that was committed as on this Day by our Fathers, in the barbarous Murder of the Lord's Anointed.

And the ſame is plainly true in many other Inſtances.

For thus the Prodigal waſtes away, in Rioting, Exceſs or Gaming that Portion of Worldly Goods which was left him by his careful Anceſtors, or neglects thoſe Opportunities of improving his Stock which the good Providence of God afforded him; and by this means comes to Beggary, He and his Children after him: But how can it otherwiſe be, unleſs God ſhould every day work Miracles, and multiply Men's Treaſure (as once he did the poor *Widow's Oyl*) on purpoſe to maintain them in their Luxury, Extravagance or Sloth?

And ſo likewiſe the Intemperate and Unclean Perſon fills his Body with foul Humours, and contracts loathſom Diſeaſes, and theſe of courſe deſcend to thoſe that derive their Bodies from his: And it muſt needs be ſo, unleſs God ſhould interpoſe with his Almighty Power, to put a ſtop to the natural Effects of our Folly and Madneſs. This indeed he might do, if he pleas'd; but that he ſhould do ſo can with no Reaſon be expected. And when it thus happens, and the Father lives to ſee it, this muſt needs be a ſore Affliction and Puniſhment to him; but to the Children it is only a Misfortune, and on God's Part it is only a Permiſſion; who can't therefore be charged with Injuſtice for ſuffering things to take their natural Courſe.

2. It may be conſider'd, that the Temporal Evils and Calamities wherewith God puniſhes the Sins of the Fathers in their Children are, for the moſt part, only Privations of thoſe Mercies which He had free-

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ly beſtowed upon them once; Or Denials of ſuch Favours as he might (if he had pleas'd) have conferr'd upon them, but was under no Obligation, in Juſtice, to grant, altho' they had been deſcended from the moſt vertuous Parents. Or, in other Words, The Children of wicked Parents are not ſo happy and proſperous as God could have made them, if he would; Their Puniſhment is commonly no more than this, that God does not ſhew them ſuch Favour, as he does (it may be) ſhew to ſome others, but is not oblig'd to ſhew to any. And what Injuſtice is there in this? *May not* he *do what* he *will with* his *own*? May not he *have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy*, and ſhew Favour to whom he pleaſes?

Thus it was in the Caſe of *Rehoboam*, from whom God was pleas'd to ſuffer Ten Tribes to revolt, for the Sin and Idolatry of his Father *Solomon*: But he needed not to have left him one Tribe; to reign over one Tribe was more than he, or his Father either, could have challeng'd of God as a Due; God did him no wrong therefore in giving him no more than one Tribe: And we can't ſay that he did, without denying to God, the Sovereign Lord and Proprietor of all things, that Power and Liberty which we our ſelves claim of beſtowing our free and unmerited Favours on whom we will. For what Man is there who, having a Place or Gift to beſtow, will not chuſe to beſtow it rather on One whoſe Father was his Friend, than on One whoſe Father was his Enemy? And who can think him to blame for ſo doing? If we therefore, who are only Stewards of thoſe things which we poſſeſs, and pretend to give away, may do thus, certainly God, the true Owner and Proprietor of all things, may do the ſame, without the leaſt Imputation of Injuſtice.

And ſuch have been the Calamities which have befallen this Nation, ſince the Perpetration of that horrid Wickedneſs which we this Day lament; thoſe Evils,

Evils, I mean more especially, which have in natural Consequence been produced or occasion'd thereby; Very grievous Calamities indeed they have been in themselves, but yet they have been rather Denials or Privations of Good, than positive Inflictions of Evil. For tho' we suffer'd for several Years after the Commission of this great Wickedness, the manifold Inconveniences both of Anarchy and Tyranny; and have never since been so well settled, either in Government or Religion, as we were before; yet after all that is come upon us, the most that can be said, is, that we have not been so happy a Nation as we might have been, and probably should have been, had not the Guilt of that Royal and Innocent Blood that was, as this Day, shed, lain upon us; But still (God be thanked) we have been more Happy than most of our Neighbour-Nations; we have, in the main, enjoy'd a much greater Measure of Liberty and Peace, of Plenty and Prosperity than most of them have done. So that tho' we have been always, like the *Israelites* of old, Murmuring and Complaining; and, like *Solomon*'s Fool, Crying out of the badness of the Times, and *Enquiring, why the former Days were better than these*; yet I believe, that if they who have been the most full of Complaints, had, when they were first born into the World, been endued with a Foresight of all that has since happen'd in the World, and it had then been put to their Choice to have liv'd in what Part of the World they had pleas'd, it would have puzled them to have found out any Country in the whole Earth, wherein they could rather have chosen to have liv'd; or wherein if they had lived, they would have suffer'd fewer Difficulties, or lesser Inconveniences, or have enjoy'd a greater Measure of Ease, Safety, Plenty, and Prosperity, than they have done here. So that tho' it may be true, and I think it probable that it is so, that we have in our Age born, in some Measure, the Iniquities of our Fathers,

Fathers, yet upon the whole, we have no reason to be discontented with our Lot, or to complain, as if we were hardly dealt with. But,

3. In order to the farther clearing this Method of the Divine Providence from the least Imputation of Injustice, it may be consider'd, that God has a Sovereign and uncontroulable Dominion over all our Persons, as well as over our Possessions; that we our selves are his Goods, as well as any of those things are, which we, by his Bounty, do enjoy; For 'twas He that made us, as well as all other things; And he might not have created us at all; or he might have made us Birds, or Beasts, or Fishes; Monsters, or Naturals; and if he had done so, we could not have complain'd. For, as the *Apostle* argues, *Rom.* ix. 12. *Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay, of the same Lump to make one Vessel unto Honour, and another unto Dishonour?*

He therefore being our Sovereign Lord, to whom we are indebted for all we have, and to whose meer Grace and Goodness it is entirely owing that we our selves have any Being at all: He may, in Right of that absolute Dominion which he has over us as our Creator, without any Injustice, put us into whatever Condition he pleases, or alter it for the worse whenever he will, without assigning any other Cause or Reason of his so Doing, but his own Pleasure only. Nay, he may, if he will, wholly take away that Life and Being, which he freely gave us, whenever he lists; when we are but a Month, or but a Day old, as well as when we have lived here threescore or fourscore Years; And in all this he does us no wrong; because it was a free and unmerited Favour, that we ever liv'd at all, and nothing can oblige him to continue to us an undeserved Favour, unless he pleases, or for a longer time than he sees good.

In short; whatever Condition God is pleas'd to put any of his Creatures into, if it be but better than Non-existence, or not being at all, *that* he may put any of his Creatures into, tho they be perfectly innocent, without doing them any wrong: And therefore it can be no Injustice in God, to take Occasion from the Sins of our Fathers, or Progenitors, to deal so by us as he might have done, tho neither they nor we had sinned. For he may certainly, without Injustice, do that upon any Occasion, which he might have justly done upon no Occasion at all.

4. It may be also considered farther, that very many, if not most, of the Evils and Calamities by which God punishes the Sins of the Fathers in their Children, are such as are very great Punishments to the Parents, but are often very small Evils, nay sometimes are very great Blessings and Favours, to the Children which suffer them.

For thus, The untimely Death of a hopeful Child is indeed a very sore Affliction to the Parent, especially when he reflects upon it as a Punishment sent by God upon him for his Sin: but 'tis a Blessing to the Child himself, who dies in the Lord, and is convey'd into Paradise out of a troublesome World, before he so much as knew the Trouble of it.

And thus likewise, To a Man that has toiled and drudged all his Days, endeavouring by Fraud, Oppression and Extortion, to heap together a great deal of Wealth, and to raise a Family, it must needs be a great Grief and Disappointment, to see his Wealth, all his ill gotten Goods, mouldering, wasting, or (as the *Wise Man* expresses it) *fleeing* away; so that his Children, whom he has brought up in all Delicacy and Softness, are in danger of being reduc'd to Beggary, or must be forced to get their Living by hard Labour; But to the Children themselves, for whose sake it is that he is so much concern'd, this Dispensation of Providence may be the greatest Blessing

ſing that could befall them; and ſo it will be, Conſideration thereof impreſſes upon their [illegible] ſerious Senſe of Religion, and helps to [illegible] to this World, and puts them upon taking [illegible] ſes, and makes them to beware of ſplitting [illegible] ſelves upon the ſame Rock.

And ſo likewiſe, if it be ſuppoſed (as I do [illegible] ſuppoſe) that we *have born*, and do ſtil bear, *the Iniquities of our Fathers*, who *ſinned and are not*; particularly that great Iniquity which was acted as upon this Day, the Barbarous Murther of an Excellent Prince, together with the other Wickedneſſes that were preparatory thereto; there may be, however, a great deal of Goodneſs as well as Juſtice in this Diſpenſation of Providence. For to them who had a Hand in this Sin, if they had any Affection at all to their Native Countrey, or any Care and Concern about Poſterity, it could not but be an Affliction to ſee what Deſolation they had, by this Sin, and the Preparations to it, brought upon their Country; to behold what Diſorder and Confuſion they had put every thing into, and to contemplate the Miſeries which were thereby entail'd upon their Poſterity: But now to us their Children, even thoſe Evils that we have ſuffered, or do yet ſuffer, upon that Account, may in Conſequence, be a Bleſſing. And ſo they will be, if we thereby ſhall be warn'd to avoid thoſe Sins which have drawn down ſuch Miſeries upon us: So they will be, if we thereby ſhall be taught to bear ſteady Loyalty to our Sovereign, to yield due Obedience to the Laws, to conform regularly to that excellent Worſhip, which by God's Providence has been ſince reſtor'd, and is now eſtabliſhed among us; to be humble, contented, and orderly, in our ſeveral Stations; to *ſtudy to be quiet, and to do our own Buſineſs*, and to *ſeek* and endeavour *after the things that make for Peace*. If we, I ſay, ſhall be ſo happy as, by all the Evils that have befallen us, to learn theſe Vertues

and

...ll have no Reason to complain of ... those Evils, from which we shall ... great Advantage. For, much bet... for us to have born the Punishment of ... Iniquity, without the Guilt of it, than it ... incur the like Guilt our selves (as pet... but such Warning we should have done) al... might escape the Temporal Punishment ... Any Evil is to be reckon'd as good, when it ... or cures a greater Evil; and there's no Evil ... so great as the least Evil of Sin.

...is therefore, and such like Cases, when by ... *Judgments* of God (whether for their own or ... Sins) Men are taught *Righteousness*, they have ... reason to complain. When the Wickedness of ... Fathers is, with this good Effect visited upon their ... dren, tho' the Matter of the Punishment seems ... upon the Children, it is yet in truth a Punish... only to the wicked Parents; but to the Children ... Blessing, and what they will have Rea... to bless God for to all Eternity. Such Punish... this are like the *Pillar of the Cloud* wherewith ... conducted the *Israelites* through the *Red Sea*, ... double, and a very different Aspect; For, ... side, *Viz.* that which looks towards the ... they are all Blackness, and Darkness, and ... They can't but be heartily concern'd ... eries which they have entail'd upon their ... But on the other side, *Viz.* that which ... ds the Children, they are all Light and ... Serving to direct them in the Way they ... and helping them to steer in the right ... heavenly *Canaan*, the Land of Everlast...

... Justice might be vindicated in Pu... executes does, the Sins of the Fathers ... not be supposed that the Chil... have done nothing to deserve Pu...

niſhment. But then I add in the fifth and laſt Place,

5. That whatever the Temporal Evils and Afflictions are, wherewith God is at any time pleaſed to puniſh the Sins of the Fathers in their Children, they are never more nor greater than the Children themſelves do deſerve to ſuffer meerly for their own Tranſgreſſions. And therefore, they can have no Reaſon to think it hard that God is pleas'd to take Occaſion from the Sins of their Fathers to inflict upon them thoſe Plagues and Puniſhments, which otherwiſe perhaps he would not have inflicted; becauſe, without Injuſtice, he might have laid the ſame upon them much ſooner, and in a larger Meaſure, only upon Account of their own Perſonal Guilt and Tranſgreſſion.

This was certainly the Caſe of the *Jews* who were carried Captive to *Babylon*. They ſaid, and perhaps truly, *Our Fathers have ſinned* —— *and we have born their Iniquity*; They ſaid, and perhaps truly, *The Fathers have eaten ſowre Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are ſet on Edge*; but they needed not to have look'd further for a Reaſon of all the Calamities that had befallen them, than to themſelves only. They had *had* indeed a good King, who after the wicked Reign of *Manaſſeh*, by which the People had been exceedingly corrupted, had ſhewn them an excellent Pattern, and had earneſtly endeavoured to reform the State of things; but it does not appear by the Hiſtory that the People were at all reform'd by his Care. And therefore the Prophet *Ezekiel* ſharply reproves them, when they were in the Captivity in *Babylon*, for laying the Blame of the Bondage, which they then endur'd only upon the Tranſgreſſion of their Fathers in the Reign of *Manaſſeh*, as if they themſelves had done nothing at all to deſerve it. *Ezek.* xviii. 2. *What mean ye, that ye uſe this Proverb concerning the Land of Iſrael, ſaying, the Fathers have eaten ſowre Grapes, and the Chil-*

dren

dren's Teeth are ſet an Edge? He does not ſay, that there was not then, nor ever had been, any Ground in Fact for that Proverbial Speech; but only, asks the Queſtion, *What mean ye* to uſe this Proverb? In which Words it is not imply'd, that the Proverb was never true, but only that they in particular had no Reaſon to uſe it; that is, that they had done enough themſelves to deſerve all they ſuffer'd and a great deal more, and ſo ſhould not have needed, in Excuſe as it were of themſelves, to have laid all the Blame upon their Fathers. And therefore it follows in the next Verſe, *As I live, ſaith the Lord, ye ſhall not have Occaſion any more to uſe this Proverb in Iſrael.* Which Words are not (as I ſuppoſe) to be underſtood, as if the Proverb might never be uſed; that is, as if God never had, nor never would inflict Temporal Evils upon Children for the Sins of the Fathers; for he himſelf plainly declares the contrary, *Exod.* xxxiv. 7. (and in more than ten Places beſides) *Viſiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, and upon the Childrens Children, unto the third, and unto the fourth Generation*; and I have already had Occaſion to mention ſeveral Examples of God's thus dealing with Men; But (the Meaning of thoſe Words, *Ye ſhall not have Occaſion to uſe this Proverb*, I take to be this,) that ſince they were ſo conceited of themſelves, and ſtood ſo much in the Juſtification of their own Innocence; God was reſolv'd to continue his Judgments upon them ſo long until their Eyes ſhould be opened to ſee their own Guilt, and to be ſenſible that all the Sufferings which they had endur'd had been no more than a juſt Puniſhment upon them for their own Tranſgreſſion only, *Ye ſhall not have Occaſion to uſe this Proverb any more.*

And this ſame, I doubt, is now our Caſe. Very willing we are to ſhift off the Blame from our ſelves, and to lay it, as in the Text, *Our Fathers have ſinned, and we have born their Iniquity*; And, it may be, we have; I think it probable enough that we have done ſo; and par-

particularly that the Innocent Blood shed as upon this Day, has since in many Instances been reveng'd upon us: But be it so, We, however, should not need to go so far off for a Reason of all our Calamities; because, if our Eyes be but open, we may easily see a sufficient Cause of them nearer Home. This I dare say, that whoever reads the History of the Times before that Great Rebellion broke out, and compares the State of Things then with what it is now, I mean as to Matters of Religion and Morality; As to the Exercise of Piety, Justice and Sobriety, will have little Reason to think that we are better than our Fathers; He will, I fear, rather have Reason to say that we are a great deal worse; so that we need not look farther than to our selves only for a Cause of all those Evils that have befallen us, or which we have yet Cause to fear. Or if what we have hitherto suffer'd has been only for the Sins of our Fathers, we have Reason to fear, that as our Wickedness is, to all Appearance, greater than theirs, so our Posterity will live to see worse Times than we have done.

For then, in the Days of our Fathers, there was at least a Form of Godliness; and now there is hardly so much as that: Then the Publick Devotions were performed regularly, the Churches duly frequented, the *Pater familias* follow'd to his Parish-Church by his whole Houshold; Good Orders, and good Hours were then kept in Families; Children and Servants were Catechis'd and taught their Duty; and that leisure Time from Business in Evenings, which is now by too many spent in intemperate Clubs, or in the Diversions of an impudent and ungodly Theatre, was then generally pass'd away in innocent and friendly Conversation among Neighbours, and in Family Discipline and Devotion. Then Vice, however it might be secretly practis'd, was ashamed to be seen; there was no Impudentness in Evil Sets; None had the Confidence then to [illegible] only against

againſt Religion, to *make a Mock at Sin*, to ridicule the Holy Scriptures, to *deny the Lord that bought them*, to plead for Irreligion, to publiſh Blaſphemy in Print, or to appear other than a Friend to Piety and Goodneſs. Nay then, the Stage it ſelf (at leaſt in Compariſon with what it has been ſince) was chaſte, modeſt, and vertuous. But what the State of things is now, in all theſe Reſpects, I ſhall not need to obſerve, we all ſee it, and know it full well. And if I ſhould ſay moreover that there are ſome ſtill among us as deeply tainted with thoſe Principles of Sedition and Rebellion which brought about this Day's Tragedy as any of their Fathers were, and who, if they had lived in their Days, would have been as forward as the forwardeſt of them were in unhinging the Government, and Deſtroying the Church, nay, and in bringing their Sovereign to the Block; tho' ſome, perhaps, would be angry at my ſaying this, I fear it would be only for my ſpeaking a Truth out of Seaſon; And they, I believe, would be moſt angry with me for ſaying it who beſt know it to be a Truth.

Upon the whole then, it being ſo apparent that we are not better than our Fathers (I would to God I could ſay that we are not worſe) tho' it may be true, that we do in ſome Meaſure bear their Iniquities, we have yet no Reaſon to complain; neither have we more Occaſion than the *Jews* in Captivity had, to uſe that Proverb, *The Fathers have eaten ſowre Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are ſet on Edge*: But rather, I'm ſure we may well uſe thoſe Words of the Prophet *Ezra*, applying them to our ſelves, and ſay; *After all that is come upon us, for our evil Deeds, and for our great Treſpaſs, our God has puniſhed us leſs than our Iniquities deſerve*; and he would have done ſo, altho' he had not granted us any of thoſe wonderful Deliverances which he has been pleas'd in our great Extremities to vouchſafe unto us. *Ezra* ix. 13.

But

But whether we now have Reason to use that Proverb or not, it is certain, that it may sometimes be said; it is certain, that God does sometimes *visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children.* And therefore, tho' when this happens, it is not (as I have shewn) to be complain'd of; yet we may at any time, very reasonably and piously desire of God, that it may not so happen to us. And this was the Third and last Point I propounded to speak to; *Viz.*

III. To shew that it is a proper Matter of Petition or Prayer to God, that he would be pleas'd to cut off this Entail of Punishment, and not make us bear the Iniquities of our Fathers.

In this Sense, I observed before, the Words of the Text, consider'd as Part of a Prayer to God, may be understood, *viz.* as urging a Reason to move God to have Compassion upon his People in Captivity: *Our Fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have born their Iniquities*: As if it had been said; "Hitherto we have "born them, but let it be so now no longer; Let "thy Justice be satisfied with that Vengeance which "thou hast already taken, in the Miseries which our "Fathers endured in their own Persons, and which "they lived to see brought upon us their Children "by their Means; Now therefore, since they *are* "*not*, since they, being gone out of this World, are "no longer sensible of those Evils which we suffer "in it; we humbly Pray thee, that thou would'st "have Pity upon us their Children, and not afflict "us any longer upon their Account; 'Tis time, we "hope, now, that thou shouldst make a new Trial "of us, and see if we will not behave our selves bet-"ter than our Fathers did."

And there are other Examples in Scripture of Prayer or Petition of this Kind: *We have sinned with our Fathers,* says the *Psalmist, we have committed Iniquity, we have done wickedly; Our Fathers understood not thy Wonders in Egypt,* and so on. What could they mean by thus confessing the Sins of their Fathers, but to Deprecate the Evils whereby those Sins had deserv'd to be punished in their Posterity? It

Psal. cvi. 6.

It is therefore an unreasonable Exception which some have made to that Petition in our Litany, *Remember not Lord our Offences, nor the Offences of our Forefathers*; as if (for that's what they would make the World believe of us) we herein comply'd with the *Papists*, in Praying for the Dead: But no such Matter, we do not herein Pray for the Dead, for those who (as the Text expresses it) *are not*; we only Pray for our selves who are alive, that we may not bear their Iniquities. And what Petition can be better grounded and warranted than this is, when we are so plainly told in several Places of Scripture, that God does *visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children*?

And as causeless is their Anger who are displeased with us for Keeping this Day, as a Day of Solemn Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, on which, *to the Dishonour of our Nation, and the Reproach of the Reformed Religion*, the Blessed King CHARLES the First was barbarously Murthered by his own Subjects, the People of this Land; and that too in the most shameful Manner, Try'd in a pretended High Court of Justice, and by them Sentenced to be Executed as a Malefactor.

But why are they angry with us for Keeping this Day? Is it because they do not like that a Day of Fasting should be kept upon such an Occasion? Then, it seems, they approve of the Fact; they think it was well done; they think it was a thing not to be asham'd or repented of. *But who can stretch forth his Hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?* If then we will take the Judgment of the Scripture before theirs, it was a Sin, and a great one too; and, if ever any single Act was such, it was a National Sin; for 'twas done by them that had then usurp'd the Supreme Authority, and there was also too general a Consent of the People to it; there is good Reason therefore that the whole Nation should be humbled and sorrowful for it, and with one Voice and Cry deprecate the Punishment thereof. 1 Sam. xxvi. 9.

But it is a long while ago, they say, since this was done; 'tis fit therefore now that the Day should be laid aside; If it was a Sin, 'twas not however *our Sin*, but the Sin of *our Fathers*, and they *are not*; what matters it then to us what they did? They have answer'd for it to God, and receiv'd their own Doom; and why should we, who had no Hand at all in the thing, take the Guilt of it upon our selves?

But if *our Fathers*, who *sinned*, *are not*, we may still bear their Iniquities; It is expresly said in Scripture, that God *visits the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children* even *to the third and fourth Generation*. If then *we* are still liable to the Divine Judgments upon that Account, I think there is Reason good that we should still continue to Pray, as we have hitherto done, that these Judgments may not befall us; but that God will *be reconciled to the Land*; and *when* he *makes Inquisition for Blood, not lay the Guilt of*

[illegible] Lord, we [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [